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ABSTRACT

In 1985, the Texas College Coordinating Board sponsored a series of regional articulation workshops designed to provide a forum for faculty representatives from both two- and four-year institutions to discuss their concerns regarding the academic preparation of transfer students. The workshops did not deal with the transfer of specific courses, but rather focused on the reading, writing, mathematical, and general education competencies which all students should gain from their lower-division college work. This report is a compendium of the recommendations developed at the articulation workshops. The first three sections emphasize the reading, writing, and mathematics competencies expected of all students who complete general education requirements at a community college, four-year college, or university. Suggestions to facilitate students' acquisition of general education competencies, reading and critical thinking skills, writing competencies, and mathematical competencies are presented next, followed by a list of common skill deficiencies. Statewide and institutional solutions are proposed in the next section. Finally, the report suggests ideas to promote information sharing among institutions and presents general comments. (EJV)

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COORDINATING BOARD
ARTICULATION WORKSHOP REPORT

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During 1985 the Texas College Coordinating Board sponsored a series of regional articulation workshops across the State of Texas. Workshops were held at East Texas State University, North Texas State University, University of Texas of the Permian Basin and Texas A&I University. Faculty from both public and private universities and community colleges participated in the workshops. Plans to hold workshops in Houston and Austin were cancelled due to State fiscal problems in 1986.

The purpose of the workshops was to provide a forum where faculty representatives from both two-year and four-year institutions could discuss their concerns regarding the academic preparation of transfer students. The workshops did not deal with the transfer of specific courses but rather focused on the reading, writing, and mathematical general education competencies which all students should gain from their lower division college work.

This report is a compendium of the recommendations made at the articulation workshops.

Mary Griffith
Program Director

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READING COMPETENCIES

Which should be possessed by all students who complete general education requirements at a community college, four-year college, or university.

Students should be able:

1) To identify and comprehend the main and subordinate ideas in a written work.

2) To summarize the ideas in one's own words.

3) To recognize different purposes and methods of writing.

4) To identify a writer's point of view and tone.

5) To interpret writer's meaning inferentially as well as literally.

6) To separate one's personal opinions and assumptions from a writer's.

7) To vary one's reading speed and method (survey, skim, review, question, master) according to the type of material and one's purpose for reading.

8) To use the features of books and other reference materials such as table of contents, preface, introduction, titles and subtitles, index, glossary.

9) To define unfamiliar words by decoding, using contextual clues, or by using a dictionary.

10) To recognize and use inductive and deductive reasoning and recognize fallacies in reasoning.

11) To draw reasonable conclusions from information found in various sources, whether written, spoken, or displayed in tables and graphs, and defend one's conclusions rationally.

12) To comprehend, develop, and use concepts and generalizations.

13) To distinguish between fact and opinion.

14) To read at least at the eleventh grade level.

15) To demonstrate analytical and reasoning skills.

16) To utilize creativity skills since problems can't always be solved logically.

17) To synthesize information.

18) To utilize effective study skills.

WRITING COMPETENCIES

Which should be possessed by all students who complete general education requirements at a community college, four-year college, or university.

Students should be able:

1) To write an essay with unity, a controlling purpose, and effective examples, illustrations, and other supporting details.

2) To adapt organization, style and tone to various audiences, purposes and contents.

3) To synthesize from disorganized data an organization that effectively communicates that data to a given audience.

4) To use the English language grammatically, clearly, precisely, and economically.

5) To control processes for brainstorming ideas, developing ideas and arguments, researching information on chosen topics, drafting, revising, rewriting, and editing.

6) To use writing to develop modes of critical analysis and to communicate effectively to others the results of those analyses.

7) To carry the working knowledge of critical analysis outside the classroom to everyday life, distinguishing between fact and opinion, between valid and invalid arguments.

8) To use writing to solve problems and to explore knowledge in all disciplines.

9) To write with syntactic maturity; that is, to use with ease and grace varied sentence structures.

10) To appreciate the importance and power of language, and especially of writing.

11) To recognize what written communication reveals about the writers themselves.

12) To assess their own writing.

13) To analyze works written by others (other students and professional writers).

14) To understand writing as a process and be able to create an acceptable product.

15) To read with comprehension and appreciation.

16) To control a varied reading vocabulary.

17) For students of languages other than English: to be able to write an essay employing the standard usage of the given language.

MATHEMATICAL COMPETENCIES

Which should be possessed by all students who complete general education requirements at a community college, four-year college, or university.

Students should be able:

1) To perform, with reasonable accuracy, the computations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division using natural numbers, fractions, decimals, and integers. Recognize that these operations cannot be applied to different units.

2) To make and use measurements in both traditional and metric units.

3) To use effectively the mathematics of:

   a) integers, fractions, and decimals;

   b) ratios, proportions, and percentages;

   c) algebra (general concepts of linear equations and the utilization of formulas);

   d) geometry (utilization of areas, volumes, and the understanding of basic geometrical configurations encountered in the everyday setting.)

4) To make estimates and approximations, and to judge the reasonableness of a result.

5) To select the data needed for problem solution and to formulate and solve a problem in mathematical terms.

6) To select and use appropriate approaches and tools in solving problems (mental computation, trial and error, paper-and-pencil techniques, calculator, and computer.)

7) To use elementary concepts of probability and statistics.

8) To draw reasonable conclusions from information found in various sources or displayed in tables and graphs.

9) To apply mathematical operations to real problems and to comprehend that this operation is creating a mathematical model of a situation.

10) To think logically, reason, and analyze problems.

SUGGESTIONS TO FACILITATE STUDENT'S ACQUISITION OF GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCIES

1) Stress active engagement with subject matter. The lecture should be discouraged because it encourages passivity. Also, unstructured group discussions tend to remain aimless.

2) Establish and maintain high expectations for performance and responsible behavior. "Being nice" to students is not enough. Do not allow students to get by with minimal effort.

3) Emphasize organized thinking, reasoning skills across curriculum.

4) We must force ourselves to set and meet standards on a course by course basis. No one should be able to survive academically into the second freshman semester without reading and writing skills.

5) Interdisciplinary approaches - both official and unofficial should be developed to integrate various disciplines to aid in development of basic competencies.

6) Raise expectations in all course work as to use of language, spelling, etc. Keep our standards up.

7) Involve faculty in advising students rather than shunting this to professional advisors. Faculty need training in advising, but they are in the best position to know each student function.

8) Test scanning machines and multiple choice tests should be limited. Our testing and teaching methodologies result in students not being encouraged or expected to write.

9) Faculty need to communicate more and reinforce reading, writing, spelling, speaking, and listening skills even though it is not the instructor's field.

10) Instructors assist students by varying their teaching styles while reinforcing the essential elements in each class. It was agreed that with greater accountability and increased expectations students should become more active and responsible in their own learning process.

11) Implement tutorial labs in reading and writing.

12) Work at developing creativity in students rather than their learning (memorizing) the information the instructor has presented.

13) Utilize models of good teaching.

14) Course prerequisites should be defined and strictly enforced.

15) All disciplines should include basic skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic, thinking, speaking, listening and studying.

16) Utilize modern technology such as computers in a way that the development and reinforcement of basic writing and reading skills is not stiffled.

17) Do not teach small bits of information with no apparent thought for relating the information. This "biting" of information, appears to be prevalent in instruction at all levels and across all disciplines.

SUGGESTIONS TO FACILITATE STUDENT'S ACQUISITION OF READING AND CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

1) Provide outlines of readings before discussions.

2) Require journals of reading and reflection.

3) Require written responses to test items.

4) Require oral responses to questions, even when doing so results in moments of painful silence.

5) Require oral reports that foster comprehension and articulation.

6) Require critical analysis of articles to encourage development of independent thought and writing skills.

7) Link basic skills such as spelling, outlining, speaking, and recalling to sophisticated ones such as comprehension, abstraction, and analysis.

8) Do not emphasize the superficial/literal reading without attention to higher order thinking skills.

9) Do not teach reading as simple decoding, but rather emphasize analytic and evaluative reading competencies.

10) Require students to read for information rather than depend strictly on lectures.

11) Require use of the library.

12) Provide inservice which promotes exchange of ideas between reading specialists and content area instructors.

SUGGESTIONS TO FACILITATE STUDENT'S ACQUISITION OF WRITING COMPETENCIES

1) Deliberately and systematically teach writing skills within every discipline area. Writing is too important a skill, linked as it is to all higher thought processes, to be left entirely to one segment of the academic community. A further benefit of teaching writing in other disciplines is the fact that students will be helped to see the relevance and necessity of learning to write and will see writing as a skill important outside the English classroom.

2) Require students to write essay exams and be willing to grade them with some attention to writing skills as well as synthesis of course content.

3) Introduce different writing occasions into the curriculum - letters, journals or reports. Don't subject all writing to evaluation. Encourage writing as a means of discovery. Use wholistic grading techniques.

4) Have students record their writing on tape. Listen to it, and then revise.

5) Inquire into student's majors and tailor writing assignments accordingly.

6) At the freshman level teach composition rather than literature or grammar.

7) Take the students through the complete process of writing: prewriting, writing, revising.

8) First have students write in various modes: narration, description, classification, and evaluation and in later courses include argumentation and persuasion, library research, and formal documentation.

9) Choose texts from many excellent ones that are available, such as The Bedford Reader, Harbrace College Handbook, et cetera.

10) Teach to emphasize communication more than correctness and rhetorical considerations rather than stylistic niceties. In this model, a lack of correctness is viewed as interference in communication. It is not the goal, but is the means to accomplish the goal of communication.

11) One hour lab courses can effectively complement freshman English courses.

12) As far as possible, teachers of writing should be writers themselves.

13) At the end of each class period, ask students to write a couple of sentences to summarize what they learned that day. This reinforces both content and writing.

14) Require correct language structure, spelling, etc. on written work in all content areas.

SUGGESTIONS TO FACILITATE STUDENT'S ACQUISITION OF MATHEMATICAL COMPETENCIES

1) Avoid merely following a menu or simply applying a formula; make the student analyze and think through to a solution.

2) Math instructors could volunteer to visit classes outside the math department to give students some insight into math applications, e.g., meet with a history or government class to talk about modeling as it applies to predicting election outcomes.

3) Use computer tutorial programs for repetition and practice.

4) Teach students to read math textbooks and especially to understand the organization of the text.

5) Have the students write in complete sentences how they would solve math problems.

6) If students are going to be tested so often, teach them how to take tests.

7) Offer courses on study skills and test taking.

8) Have students make up their own problems and then solve them.

9) If juniors in college are tested on what they learned in the seventh and eighth grades, perhaps those skills should be reinforced as the students continue their education in college.

MAJOR STUDENT DEFICIENCIES

- Problem solving, fundamental computational skills, reading and analyzing, abstract thinking.
- Students fail to retain information.
- Math majors show weakness in logarithms, trig identities, proofs, and manipulating rational equations.
- Students have problems with written (word, thought, etc.) questions because of a lack of verbal skills. For example: When asked how to solve "What is 40% of 200?" a student expresses no idea of what to do; when told that generally the verb is "equals," he is unable to pick out the verb. An effort must be made to make students realize that the different disciplines are not different at all, but must be integrated.
- In discussions with industry people, we have heard the same song; College graduates know the mathematics, but cannot communicate.
- The members of Group V agreed that certain basic skills were essential for any student in a mathematics course or in the workforce. They also agreed that most students were lacking in these skills. Problem solving needs more emphasis. Most students will not continue work on a problem that is not quickly solved. They are unable to separate trivial information from that which is essential. Reading, especially reading with understanding, is important in mathematics. Writing and vocabulary improvement is also important. Concentration is a skill with which most students need help. In general, most students have poor study skills.
- Frequently students lack motivation and have poor attitudes. Many college students seem to feel that all that is necessary for success is showing up for class.
- Many students lack critical thinking skills and fail to use common sense in the problem solving process.
- Students are test-wise, that is many students prepare for a test, but fail to retain information for very long after the test.
- Students lack essential skills in reading, writing, critical analysis, and abstract thinking. Students cannot expect success in college or on the job unless they can listen attentively, speak coherently, spell correctly, format appropriately, and summarize or outline accurately.
- Students emphasize "grades" and "degree" to the exclusion of learning to learn and to apply skills to class content and real life.

- Entering freshmen are unwilling to enroll in remedial courses, even though advised to do so. Underprepared students encounter extreme difficulty in other content courses when they simultaneously enroll in both transfer courses and remedial/developmental courses.

- The mechanical skills of writing are being acquired by community college students better than the higher level composition and thinking skills such as organization, development and fluency.

SOLUTIONS - STATEWIDE/INSTITUTIONAL

- Emphasize remediation and college preparation in high school. The university standards set high school exit standards.
- Provide follow-up information to high schools and community colleges regarding the performance of their students after transfer.
- If admissions is open door, proper testing, counselling and placement should be mandated. Standards for acceptance into college-level classes do not conflict with an open admissions policy provided compensatory programs are available.
- Require all students to demonstrate basic competencies prior to advancement into junior level work.
- Require students to demonstrate the basic skills prior to entry into college-level work.
- Colleges with an open admissions policy have a moral obligation to see that the students they enroll are placed in courses where they can succeed. These institutions need a testing and counseling program to help better serve the student and aid in his intellectual growth.
- High schools require a minimum level of mathematics for graduation, but colleges require a higher level for a minimum entry. These expectations need to be closer together.
- Every high school student should be required to successfully complete two years of algebra.
- More dialogue or communication is needed among high school, junior college, and university faculties.
- Consideration should be given to spending some of the money spent on tests on teachers. It might be a much wiser investment.
- On standardized tests, rather than having all multiple choice math questions, there should be a few math problems to be worked out where students must show their work.
- It was brought out to the surprise of many of the community college faculty that the senior institutions will construct degree plans for freshman community college students if the community college personnel would request it.

- One problem that is prevalent is one of the student postponing taking his math until the problem of scheduling is compounded by the sequential nature of the subject. Students should be encouraged to take their math as early as possible. Emphasis should be placed on advising programs in community colleges that are more effective in getting students to go ahead and take as much mathematics in junior colleges as time will allow. There was a feeling that faculty advising programs assist in this goal.

- One of the problems with students passing standardized mathematics tests might be a lack of use of mathematics. Advisors should encourage students in high school to take math 4 years if they intend to go to college and they should start mathematics their freshman year in college.

- Counseling and advising in institutions of higher education need improvement.

- Introduce a "Practical Logic Across the Curriculum" course to introduce the critical thinking component.

- Recommend smaller classes for freshman and sophomore level general education courses.

- Hold seminars/workshops for all faculty in a college to motivate them to buy into reinforcing basic competencies within all subject matter fields.

- College administration and department heads should make a strong commitment that all instructors must assume the responsibility to reinforce basic reading skills and provide an opportunity for staff development (released time and/or compensation for reading specialist input) evaluation technique.

- Members noted that even though community colleges are open admissions (and justifiably so) this did not necessarily mean open enrollment to any or all classes. The unanimous concern was that students, who are deficient in certain skills, are being allowed to enroll in classes above their competency level.

- Testing, with all of its negative and positive points, was thought to be necessary to ascertain each student's deficiencies and abilities. The committee expressed concern that not everyone does well on tests. An individualized wholistic (i.e., combining writing sample with an English test) approach to testing is preferable. Flexibility may be necessary for those students who want to appeal the results of the test or who wish to re-take tests.

- Another concern is that instructors may begin to "teach to the test". In response, one person noted that the tests are examining an individual's competency of the essential elements, and we should welcome "teaching to the test". Tests can be used to change what is taught in positive ways.

- Incorporate reading development in every area but don't expect every instructor to be a remedial reading teacher.

- Establish lines of communication between upper and lower level instructors to address local concerns.

- Establish and apply requirements for demonstrated effectiveness in communication.

- Instill in students a sense of responsibility for their performance and a willingness to accept criticism.

- Expect competencies in basic skills be demonstrated before encouraging "creativity". Recognize that there is a hierarchy of importance in skills.

- Be willing to "bite the bullet", and advise students on the basis of their possibilities for success in their chosen career.

- Basic entry level competencies in reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics, reasoning, and studying should be the same for any college or university.

- Community college teachers should expect more from their students. The final product must be up to standard; effort alone is an insufficient basis for grading.

- Build networks between campuses and between campuses and workplaces to ensure that upon graduation students possess needed competencies. Improve communication between departments. This takes deliberate action - it doesn't just happen.

- Faculty lack the training to deal with the diversity of students encountered under open door admissions.

- Professional educators should have the right to say who should pass or fail - not a statewide test.

- Ample support services such as English Composition Labs and computer-assisted instruction should be provided to aid faculty in dealing with underprepared students without making their own heavy loads heavier.

- Smaller classes, emphasizing dialogue and discussion (should be allowed) since student needs are usually most effectively met in personalized settings and since, otherwise, faculty become prone to "burn out."

- Improve student orientation to stimulate altered expectations regarding university life and study time (examples: reading level tests, academic panels, networking/mentoring by older students and/or faculty) at both freshman and junior transfer levels.

- Develop exit exams, panel read, at the freshman composition level (either as part of the course grade or pass-fail with an appeals process). Alternatively or additionally, students should be required to demonstrate university-level reading competence before moving into regular composition courses. To compensate for the heavy faculty workload associated with these tasks, some institutions provide honoraria.

Others - unfortunately but understandably - have abolished exit exams due to faculty "burn out". Students in competency-based and measured programs could perhaps be exempted from state-imposed testing procedures. Such an exemption would encourage institutions to take care of their own and "guarantee" competencies, thereby avoiding the extension of state-imposed "public-ization" that so often strangles primary and secondary education while students still fail to learn adequately.

- Develop teaching evaluations that signal the need for professors to work with students on the acquisition of basic academic competencies while course content is taught.

- Development of adequate reading, writing, and critical thinking skills at all levels of education can be facilitated by:

    1. Smaller classes (twenty-five (25) maximum)
    2. A practical logic course as follow-up support for above skills
    3. Articulation with public schools
    4. Placement testing <u>before</u> registration

IDEAS TO PROMOTE INFORMATION SHARING

1) Compile a directory of math and English teachers for each college or university identifying the individual in charge of the math or English curriculum in that institution. Exchange syllabic and final exam sample.

2) Hold regular statewide conferences for curriculum leaders to discuss curriculum charges and their rationale. Discuss exemplary models, curriculum need and textbook choices.

3) Hold area workshops involving high school, community college, and university faculty to discuss student skill levels, needs, and transfer issues.

4) Teachers should be organized on a regional basis to share curriculum review, collaboration, and goal setting. Joint committees schools should be formed to work on articulation issues.

5) Exchange faculty on a routine basis.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Calculators should be restricted past high school usage. Students need to learn mathematical operations prior to using a calculator.
- Most competencies recommended for college students are the same as those desirable for the general work force.
- If I used the same standards I did 15 years ago, my students (and I) would be in trouble.
- Students make a choice as to whether or not they are college bound in the eighth or ninth grade when they really don't know. They often avoid the harder courses.
- It should be realized that college may not be for everyone. Some students may need to be counseled out.
- Many textbooks are improperly written; organization of some texts is a real problem. The language of the texts needs to be written at a more appropriate level.
- Students' being required to take so many tests, my cause teachers to teach for the tests rather than to teach general subject matter. (There was also concern that those who compose the tests will determine the curriculum.) One member questioned who was being tested, the teachers or the students.
- Students have certain responsibilities to fulfill also. The faculties in the junior and senior colleges can't do it all for them. Many students have avoided dedicated teachers and a lot of learning for many years. It is up to the students to finally make an effort.
- There was an agreement that the community college student many times had problems adjusting to the four year college.
- The essential elements instituted by the Texas Education Agency in the public school curriculum are minimum skills.
- Universities have failed to communicate what they expect.
- The "new" emphasis on success or adequacy based on test scores rather than "success" as measured by grade point average may be a result of liberalization of grades and the inability of higher education to police itself and particularly the inability of schools of education to maintain standards of performance.
- The large number of dropouts during the first few years of college work is a concern.

- Faculties expect a higher reading level of students than they actually possess; faculties choose textbooks which are written at a higher level than students can handle.

- The idea of a "rising junior" exam is welcomed. It can verify learning and encourage both students and teachers to take their task seriously. However, we should avoid turning the university into a bureaucratized stressful learning factory where quality control is superimposed on cost effective quantity production.

- Standardized tests are likely to have unhealthy influences in the classroom. Professors will teach to the test and produce good test-takers.

- Recommending university students in need of specific remediation to area community colleges is a limited answer to the almost overwhelming need for remedial programs.

- Perhaps senior universities should create intermediary courses to help transfer students upgrade skills that will ensure their success in the universities and not expect community colleges to fulfill that function for all students.

- Universities are far removed from the real world while community colleges are out of touch with student follow-up. The various educational components must find a mechanism for continual interaction to keep curriculum integrated.

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